

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 OMB-01 IO-14 DRC-01 /088 W

----- 044079

O R 111157Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2139

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2143

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: TEL AVIV 2127 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: MRS MEIR'S RESIGNATION, TO BECOME OFFICIAL
APRIL 11, CONVERTS PRESENT GOVT INTO CARETAKER
ONE AND SETS IN MOTION COMPLEX MACHINERY FOR FORMATION OF NEW
GOVT. LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL NORMS AS WELL AS
CUSTOMARY PRACTICE PROVIDE FOR TWO POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS:
A) CONSULTATIONS LEADING TO SELECTION OF NEW LABOR PARTY
(OR OTHER) KNESSET MEMBER TO FORM NEW GOVT, AND/OR B) DISSOLUTION
OF KNESSET AND HOLDING OF NEW ELECTION. WE BELIEVE THAT
LABOR LEADERSHIP'S FIRST EFFORT WILL BE TO TRY TO REBUILD
CURRENT TRIPARTITE COALITION WITH NEW PM, POSSIBLY RESHUFFLING
PRESENT MINISTERS, AND ONLY IF THIS FAILS TURN TO NEW ELECTION.
OPPOSITION LIKUD IS PRESSING FOR NATIONAL UNITY GOVT WHICH
MOST LABOR LEADERS NOW OPPOSE. IF NEW ELECTION IS HELD, IT
PROBABLY WOULD TAKE PLACE NO EARLIER THAN AUGUST. SAPIR AND
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OTHERS ARE TALKING ABOUT OCTOBER 21-24 PERIOD. END SUMMARY.

1. EXACTLY ONE MONTH AFTER NEW GOVT WAS SWORN IN, MRS MEIR TODAY HAS PRESENTED HER RESIGNATION TO CABINET AND PRESIDENT. ANALYSIS BELOW OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL SITUATION AS WELL AS OF CUSTOMARY PRACTICE IN ISRAELI POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IS BASED ON VARIETY OF SOURCES INCLUDING PRESS. WE HAVE NOTED IN PAST THAT THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY IN ISRAELI POLITICAL PROCESS AND EVEN SOME OF GUIDELINES OUTLINED BELOW CONCEIVABLY COULD BE MODIFIED.

2. WITH MRS MEIR'S RESIGNATION TODAY, ENTIRE GOVT RESIGNS AND BECOMES A CARETAKER GOVT UNTIL SUCH TIME AS NEW GOVT IS FORMED, HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES. LEGALLY AND PRACTICALLY, THIS GOVT HAS SAME POWERS AS REGULAR GOVT. UNDER ISRAELI LAW, NO ONE CAN RESIGN OR BE FORCED TO RESIGN FROM A CARETAKER GOVT, NOR CAN KNESSET APPLY NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE AGAINST IT. INTERNAL RESHUFFLING OF MINISTERS CAN TAKE PLACE PROVIDED KNESSET APPROVES. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE THERE IS NO PROVISION IN LAW FOR WHAT WOULD HAPPEN SHOULD CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER REFUSE TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE.

3. UNDER ISRAELI LAW, NEXT STEP COULD BE FOR PRESIDENT KATZIR (PRESUMABLY AT REQUEST OF KNESSET LEADERSHIP AND NOT ON OWN INITIATIVE) TO CARRY OUT CONSULTATIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF PARTIES IN KNESSET. ACCORDING TO CUSTOMARY PRACTICE, PRESIDENT ASKS CANDIDATE PROPOSED BY LARGEST PARTY-- I.E.. LABOR PARTY-- TO TRY TO FORM A NEW GOVT. THIS CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE 42 DAYS WITHIN WHICH TO CARRY OUT THIS TASK. IF FIRST CANDIDATE WERE UNSUCCESSFUL, PRESIDENT COULD TURN TO ANOTHER KNESSET MEMBER WHO CONCEIVABLY COULD BE FROM PARTY OTHER THAN LABOR PARTY. CONCEIVABLY, RESHUFFLED CARETAKER CABINET, IF IT WORKED OUT TO PARTICIPANTS' SATISFACTION, COULD BECOME -- MINUS PRIME MINISTER -- NEW GOVT WHICH WOULD EMERGE FROM PRESIDENTIAL CONSULTATION PROCESS.

4. ALTERNATELY, INSTEAD OF ABOVE NOTED CONSULTATION PROCESS, KNESSET COULD DECIDE TO DISSOLVE ITSELF AND CALL FOR NEW ELECTION. THIS ALREADY HAS HAPPENED TWICE-- IN 1951 AND 1961. CURRENT GOVT AS NOTED ABOVE THEN CONTINUES AS CARETAKER GOVT

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5. SHOULD KENESSET DECIDE TO DISSOLVE ITSELF AND CALL NEW ELECTION, SUCH A KNESSET BILL COULD NOT BE PASSED EARLIER THAN MAY 6 WHEN KNESSET SCHEDULED TO RETURN FROM PASSOVER RECESS (IT IS MEETING IN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION TODAY). ACCORDING TO PRESS SOURCES, NEW ELECTION COULD NOT BE HELD EARLIER THAN 100 DAYS IN ORDER TO ALLOW ARMY OFFICERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS WHO WANT TO RUN TO RESIGN FROM THEIR OFFICE BEFORE NEW ELECTORAL LISTS ARE SUBMITTED (THIS DETERMINED TIMING OF ARIK SHARON'S RESIGNATION FROM ARMY LAST SUMMER TO RUN AS LIKUD CANDIDATE). PRESS CITES INTERIOR MINISTRY SOURCE AS STATING THAT, SINCE AUGUST IT VACATION MONTH AND SEPTEMBER PERIOD OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS, ELECTION SHOULD BE SCHEDULED FOR MID-OCTOBER.

6. HAVING EXPLAINED CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL ASPECT OF CURRENT SITUATION, ANALYSIS BELOW ADDRESSES ITSELF TO PROBABLE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM AT THIS TIME.

7. LABOR PARTY WILL SEEK INTERNAL CONSENSUS AROUND AN ACCEPTABLE CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED MRS MEIR. NAMES PRESENTLY
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MENTIONED ARE SAPIR, ZADOK, ALMOGI AND RABIN. EACH OF

THESE FACES DIFFICULTIES IN ATTAING SUCH CONSENSUS IN VIEW OF CURRENT UPHEAVAL WITHIN LABOR PARTY, AND IT IS FAR FROM CLEAR WHETHER ANY OF THEM, OR ANY OTHER CANDIDATE, COULD SUCCEED IN FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT IN NEAR-TERM. IF NEW GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE FORMED, NEW ELECTION BECOMES INEVITABLE. IN SUCH CASE, PARTY WOULD FACE SAME PROBLEM OF AGREEING ON CANDIDATE TO HEAD LIST. LABOR PARTY WILL HAVE TO DECIDE ALOMST IMMEDIATELY WHETHER IT WILL EVEN TRY TO AGREE ON NEW CANDIDATE TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT NOW OR WHEHTER IT WILL OPT FOR CONTINUING WITH CURRENT GOVERNMENT AND GOI TO ELECTION.

8. LIKUD AND NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY ALREADY HAVE RENEWED THEIR CALL FOR FORMATION OF NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. THUS, ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IN ADDITION TO THOSE NOTED ABOVE IS THAT UNITY GOVERNMENT COULD BE FORMED, LASTING UNTIL NEW ELECTION OR AS PERMANENT NEW GOVERNMENT WITHOUT RECOURSE TO NEW ELECTION.

9. RECOGNIZING GREAT DIFFICULTY IN MAKING MEANINGFUL PREDICTION IN FAST-MOVING AND EXTREMELY UNCERTAIN DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE, WE NONETHELESS BELIEVE THAT VIEWS OF TWO LABOR PARTY MKS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN TODAY MAY BE OF INTEREST TO DEPARTMENT. GAD YAACOB, OF DAYAN'S RAFI FACTION, BELIEVES THAT LABOR PARTY HAS ONLY TWO CHOICES: (A) NEW GOVERNMENT ON SAME COALITION BASIS AS OUTGOING ONE OR (B) NEW ELECTION WHICH COULD BE HELD WITHIN 2-4 MONTHS. YAACOB INSISTED THAT ELECTION COULD BE EARLIER THAN OCTOBER AND THAT TECHNICALITIES ON TIMING COULD BE RESOLVED IF POLITICAL WILL TO DO SO EXISTED. YAACOB STRESSED THAT LABOR PARTY, AND NRP ALSO, WERE AFRAID OF NEW ELECTION BUT THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE IF EFFORT TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT PROVED UNSUCCESSFUL. ADI AMORAI, OF ALLON'S AHDUT AVODAH FACTION, BELIEVES THAT NEW ELECTION IS INEVITABLE AND THAT IT WILL TAKE PLACE BETWEEN OCTOBER 21-OCTOBER 24, WITH CURRENT GOVERNMENT CONTINUING IN CARETAKER CAPACITY. AMORAI BELIEVES THAT LABOR PARTY BY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION WILL TURN TO RABIN TO HEAD LIST. HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT CURRENT CRISIS WILL NOT IMPEDE GOI ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS RE ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS AND IN FACT LABOR PARTY WOULD WANT TO SCORE SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL FIELD TO STRENGTHEN ITS CLEARLY WEAKENED POSITION AT HOME.

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